

GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

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The reasons that Jesus said he came to the earth – Part 1

We have looked at the 7 I am statements of Jesus. They pointed to him as a person - *who* he is.

Now we are going to look at the “I have come” statements. These are where Jesus describes *why* he came to the earth.

There are also 7 themes in the “I have come” statements.

Some of them are surprising, and can be hard to get a grip on. Like this first theme:

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

“I have come to bring fire on the earth”

Not really the “gentle Jesus meek and mild” picture there – or even the “we must all live in peace” message that people often think that Jesus is about:

LK 12:49 "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

MT 10:34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn " `a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- ³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' ³⁷ MT 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

So what are these passages about?

Clearly, it is not about how we treat each other in the church:

2CO 13:11 ... Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace.

1TH 5:..... Live in peace with each other.¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

And not about how we treat those outside the church:

HEB 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men...

RO 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

It's clear that in our relationships with all others we should take peace wherever we go – after all, Jesus said:

MT 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

And James writes:

JAS 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

And we know that one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace.

So Jesus must be talking about something else.

The opposite of peace. There are themes of division, fire, violence, family and friendship splits, suffering and loss of life. All these things, Jesus said, he has come to bring.

It is all about an eternal truth – the situation which actually exists in the universe – rather than what is assumed and accepted by men.

The world does not see that the stakes are very high in the fight for the lives of men – and I am sure that we don't appreciate it enough either.

Jeremiah prophesied it on the Old Testament:

JER 6:10 To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it.

People think that because there is no war or severe hardship, everything is alright. They don't want to know.

JER 6:14 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD.

And the church can be complicit in this sleepwalking to destruction if it doesn't speak up for the Kingdom of God and for Jesus.

When we do speak up and become active - then battle is entered

But remember – it's not against people:

EPH 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

It's the devil's schemes – and the other spiritual forces of evil. He does not play fair and is very nasty. Once the church starts to become becomes effective and visible he will do all he can do to disrupt and discredit it.

It is not for nothing Peter and Jesus had this discussion:

MT 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" MT 16:17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus knew that the force and power of Hell would be summoned to go against the church – but the church would stand firm on the rock of Peter’s declaration:

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”

So the foundation on which God builds is Jesus – and when the church stands on that foundation, it will not be defeated. That is Jesus’s promise.

So why will there be division, fire, violence, family splits, suffering and loss of life?

Because the kingdom of God clashes with the dominion of darkness – the gates of hell. There is no middle ground or neutrality. It is war – there are two sides. There are casualties. And fire can come from unexpected places.

When you read through Acts you see time and time again, the followers of Jesus tried to be at peace with those around. But they were bold in proclaiming the good news of Jesus. And time and time again, there were riots, divisions, beatings, and death. The same has happened over the centuries, all over the world where the church is active.

The easy thing is to not to put our heads above the parapet – not to go over the top. It is more peaceful and comfortable to just bumble along and not live and proclaim the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Jesus.

Because when we do – then battle is joined. It is a sign that we are doing what God wants us – what Jesus came to do even. We do not seek division and suffering – but there is no way round it if we are serious about the Gospel being good news – it clashes exactly with the bad news that people who reject Jesus are going to hell.

The enemy would rather keep people in the dark

But we are the “light of the world” as Jesus said. Light and darkness are mutually opposed. And people do not know they are in the dark and stumble around feeling for this way or that way to have a fulfilled life.

So the question is:

Are we ready to expect opposition, difficulties, suffering and loss for Jesus and his church – because it will come and is already here.

^{1PE 5:8} Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to **devour**. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Are we serious about Jesus and the church?

If we are then the good news is that we have been given the armour to stand firm:

^{EPH 6:10} Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints

So we have a great set of equipment – truth, righteousness, readiness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word of God, praying in the Spirit, alertness and looking out for each other.

But remember, the enemy will seek to disarm us – so let's keep a check on our kit – and check each other's as well.

So this is what we shall do – and the gates of hell will not overcome what God wants to do here and in the world.